The RECONSTRUCTIONIST

VOL. XIV. JANUARY 7, 1949 TEBET 6, 5709 No. 18

- ***MOBY DICK AND THE PARABLE OF JONAH***

  by Jacob J. Weinstein

- ***A LAYMAN SPEAKS OUT***

  by Lawrence W. Crohn

- ***JUDAISM'S SHARE IN ACHIEVING AMERICAN RELIGIOUS FREEDOM (Review)***

  by Frances Burnce

- ***RANDOM THOUGHTS***

  by M.M.K.

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the Reconstructionist

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IMPORTANT CONFERENCE

on

THE NEXT STEP IN ORGANIZING THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

Sunday, February 6, 1949

2:30 P.M. and 8 P.M.

Among participants in the discussion—

Mordecai M. Kaplan, Oscar Janowsky, Louis Kraft, Israel S. Chipkin and Albert I. Gordon.

Attendance open only to Foundation members and by invitation

The RECONSTRUCTIONIST

Vol. XIV January 7, 1949 Tebet 6, 5709 No. 18

EDITORIALS

TORAH FROM ZION

THE recently published draft of the proposed constitution of the State of Israel is a remarkable historical document. As finally revised and adopted, it will assuredly become one of the basic texts of modern Jewish history, a text that will be studied and, in part, memorized by Jewish school children for generations to come. Even if the proposed constitution were not—as it is designed to become—the basic law of a state created by centuries of travail and miracle, it would still be an extraordinary document.

Its far-reaching, thorough-going application of democratic principles to almost every aspect of the society it orders, makes it one of the most advanced social texts of our times. The gaps that time and circumstance have so painfully revealed in our American constitution are here, in theory at least, closed up.

The absolute equality of the sexes, guaranteed by the constitution represents an achievement as yet unattained in American law. Equal pay for equal work, for example, is still one of the current objectives of those advocating an equal rights amendment to our constitution. The abolition of capital punishment marks yet another social advance; one, incidentally, in keeping with both the tendency of traditional Jewish law and the best thinking of modern penology. The right to work and a just share in the national income make explicit the obligation of the state towards the economic welfare of its citizens. The granting of broad rights to religious and cultural minorities, such as the observance of their own weekly day of rest and maintenance of schools in their own cultural traditions, should put an end to any loose talk about Jewish domination of the Arab minority.

While establishing full freedom of speech, of the press and of assembly, the constitution does set up, and wisely so, in our opinion, two important limitations. "This constitutional guarantee (of freedom of speech) shall not extend to utterances or publications . . . which are designed to stir up religious or racial hatred . . . or which advocate the suppression of human rights, or of the democratic system of government." Without entering into an extended discussion of this much-debated question, we believe these provisions are thoroughly sound and, in the last analysis, legitimately motivated. The same justification as that for barring obscenity—its moral offensiveness—applies to the outlawing of group slander or of speech aimed at the destruction of human rights or democratic government.

While a full analysis of the constitu-

tion would take us far beyond the limits of an editorial,* at least one provision should give the thoughtful reader pause. At the very least, further clarification is necessary. We have called attention above to the establishment of absolute equality between the sexes. The constitution calls for the setting up of religious courts to adjudicate questions relating to personal status. Taken in juxtaposition, these two provisions seem mutually contradictory. It is difficult to see how such courts, which are committed to the traditional *halakah,* can maintain the constitutional guarantee of "no discrimination of any kind on the grounds of . . . sex." It is no secret that the *halakah,* as presently constituted, does discriminate between the sexes in such important matters as divorce and inheritance. Unless a radical revision of the *halakah* in this matter is contemplated—a most remote possibility in the light of the present temper of the Rabbinate of Israel — a flagrant contradiction in the constitution is involved.

To be sure, the religious courts had jurisdiction in such questions of personal status also during the mandatory regime, but, for Jews, the jurisdiction of the rabbinical tribunals was limited to those who voluntarily accepted their jurisdiction. Liberal circles seldom had recourse to them. The provisions in the present constitution may be construed as continuing that arrangement. Without that assumption, it is hard to conceive how the framers of the draft constitution could have overlooked the inconsistencies in their draft. Perhaps some such compromise as prevails at present is the best immediately obtainable and a more satisfactory solution will have to wait until conditions are more settled, the State more stable and secure, and its Jewish population more culturally homogeneous. But if what is contemplated is the continuance, at least for the immediate future, of the present limitation of the rabbinical authority to apply in civil matters only to those who accept its jurisdiction, that limitation should, at least, be made explicit in the text of the constitution.

But whatever the reservation one may entertain in regard to one or another particular, the proposed constitution as a whole is a document worthy not only of the valiant idealism of the citizens of Israel but of the prophetic tradition of social justice of the people of Israel. The old words, "for from Zion shall go forth the law," will, with the adoption of the constitution, receive new and vital meaning.

* We hope to publish in an early issue a more detailed analysis of the draft constitution by Dr. Milton R. Konvitz.—*Editors.*

THE B'NAI B'RITH HILLEL FOUNDATION—RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

WE congratulate the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation on the twenty-fifth anniversary of its founding. That event marks the completion of a quarter of a century of service to the Jewish college youth of America. The establishment of the Hillel Foundation will, we believe, be regarded by future historians of American Jewry as typical of its creative response to the new conditions of life which prevail in this country. Nowhere else, and at no other time, have so many Jewish young men and women enjoyed the benefits and experienced the challenge inherent in a higher education in schools under non-Jewish auspices. Whether a college education shall result in a stimulating cultural cross-fertilization, or in the submergence of the Jewish culture beneath that of the predominant Christian majority is the challenge; the establishment of Hillel

Foundations and similar institutions is American Jewry's creative response.

To be sure, the problem is still with us. Twenty-five years is a short period in history and only a beginning toward a solution could be made in so short a time. There is good ground for believing that the next quarter of a century will witness not only an expansion of but a significant improvement in the work of Hillel. But the Hillel Foundations at the various colleges, their directors, the leaders of the sponsoring organzation, B'nai B'rith, and American Jewry generally may well join in a joyful *Sheheheyanu* on the completion of the first twenty-five years.

The Hillel Foundation owes its origin to Professor Edward Chauncey Baldwin, a devout Christian and Professor of Biblical Literature at the University of Illinois, and to Rabbi Benjamin Frankel, who was graduated in 1923 from Hebrew Union College. Both men were disturbed by the lack of Jewish knowledge on the part of the Jewish students at the University of Illinois. The establishment of the Hillel Foundation there was the pioneering venture. With the sponsorship of the movement by B'nai B'rith, it assumed national scope. Under the directorship of Dr. Abram L. Sachar, who held that position from 1930 to 1948, the movement expanded rapidly. Today there are sixty-eight full-time Foundations in as many universities and one hundred and twenty-two Counsellorships, the Counsellor being a local rabbi who devotes part of his time to organizing and directing Jewish student activities. Approximately 150,000 Jewish students are enrolled in the universities where Hillel units function today. That, of course, is far in excess of the numbers actually affiliated with Hillel, the proportion probably approximating that of Jews affiliated with the synagogue to the total Jewish adult population. There thus remains plenty of room for expansion both in the number of colleges to be reached and in the number of students to be reached in each college.

There is also room for the extension and the intensification of the Jewish activities of the Foundations. At present these embrace the holding of religious services for each of the denominational groups,—Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform—wherever there are a sufficient number to attend them; instruction in Hebrew, Jewish history, Jewish literature, Jewish philosophy, current Jewish problems, elements of Jewish religion and other subjects; the promotion of fellowship through social affairs; interfaith activities; personal counselling; and student participation in Jewish movements. The social welfare activities which at first were limited to helping fellow students on the campus have branched out and now include the mobilization of the student body in support of Jewish nation-wide and world-wide causes. In the academic year of 1947-48, the Hillel Foundations collected and distributed over a quarter of a million dollars for such causes.

One cannot evaluate the achievement of Hillel without appreciating the difficulties under which it labors. Most Jewish college students have had little previous Jewish education. What Jewish education they received was, with few exceptions, terminated at Bar Mitzvah or shortly thereafter. In other words, Judaism was never previously presented to them on any but a child's level. In consequence it seems puerile in comparison with their newly acquired knowledge of non-Jewish cultures. Moreover, the college student, whose time is mostly taken up with satisfying the requirements of the prescribed curriculum is often and understandably reluctant to pursue further study as an extra-curricular activity. Then, too, student life is more or less isolated from

the main currents of communal life. The campus almost constitutes a world by itself, with its own demands and its own standards. College years seem an interlude in the personal career of the individual, which calls for a sort of moratorium on responsibilities to home and community and makes Jewish motivations seem irrelevant.

Under such circumstances, the job of the Hillel Director is no sinecure. It is one which requires not only rare personal qualities, but also specialized training. Moreover, there is need for the creation of a mass of literature designed especially for the college student. The fact that collegiate youth are tempted to isolate themselves from the community makes all the more important the efforts of the community to meet the needs of the student on the campus and to retain or establish contact between him and the synagogue and other Jewish communal agencies.

All this requires ample support, and we endorse the appeal of Hillel for the funds to enable it to expand its activties. We go further; we look to our seminaries and schools of higher learning to recognize the importance of Hillel's work by providing for the specific training of some of their students for the special tasks of Hillel leadership.

The extension of Hillel Foundations to an ever increasing number of colleges, the enrollment of more and more students in their activities, the training, employment, and guidance of Directors and Counsellors, the creation of Jewish cultural material on an adult level, material that is scholarly but not pedantic, intellectual but also warm and vital—these are the aims to which Hillel must raise its sights during the next quarter of a century on which it is entering. Under the able leadership of its national director, Rabbi Arthur J. Lelyveld, it can look forward hopefully toward achieving these goals.

THE NEED FOR JEWISH COMMUNAL SANCTIONS

ONE of the painful facts about Jewish life is that Jewry as a whole is blamed for the foibles and the sins of individual Jews. The practice of holding all responsibble for the actions of a few is one from which all minorities suffer; and Jews are no exception. To counteract this tendency is one of the purposes of inter-faith and inter-cultural organizations. Some day, perhaps, the evil will be eliminated. In the meantime, there are some Jewish communities in the world that want to do something to mitigate the full effect of this practice on the Jewish people.

What they propose to do is to create communal agencies which would serve as a sort of court of honor, to apply sanctions against those who act in such a way as to cast shame upon the Jewish people as a whole. To be sure, they believe that everything possible should be done to make non-Jews understand that the Jewish community cannot justly be blamed for the misdeeds of individual Jews. But non-Jews would have that fact brought home to them more vividly if Jews openly repudiated those wrong-doers who drag the name of Jew through the mud.

A proposal along these lines was made recently at a meeting of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. The suggestion to apply sanctions against Jews who damage the community's good name was made in connection with a bribery scandal in British public life involving high government officials and financial operators, including a number of Jews. Some Jewish communities have gone further. In Mexico, Jews who failed to contribute sufficiently to the "United Campaign for the

Aid of the State of Israel" are being "excommunicated." Trials are held, at which some Jews are sentenced to expulsion from the community. The United Campaign office asserts, in a published statement, that such methods "have been emulated by the Jewries of Argentina and other countries of Latin America."

We are inclined to agree with the *Jewish Monthly* of London that such steps as were taken by the Jews of Mexico betray a spirit of "chauvinism." How much a man gives to a particular communal cause may depend upon a variety of factors; besides, generosity cannot be legislated. Jews familiar with fund-raising techniques know that wherever people are well acquainted with one another, contributions tend to rise to a maximum, because a strong, if unofficial, moral force operates to shame the person of means into giving large contributions. The Jew who can afford to donate great sums, and does not do so, can expect the cold shoulder from his neighbors and friends.

But the Jew who brings disgrace upon the Jewish people is in an altogether different category. In this instance, the community has every right to express its opinion of such men, not only for the sake of "public relations," but, perhaps even more significantly, for the sake of Jewish morale and self-respect. Jews should be able to feel that they belong to an honorable community which expects decent behavior on the part of its adherents and discountenances violation of its standards. Without resort to ways of expressing its indignation at a departure from its standards, the Jewish community cannot make the individual feel that there is any dignity to being a Jew. Men who have been proven guilty of fraud or bribery, who have violated the moral code of the general community, should, therefore, be barred from holding office in Jewish institutions, even if they have been heavy contributors to worthy causes. They might also be denied certain personal services of the community such as marriage or funeral rites.

Such organized resistance to Jews whose conduct is inimical to Jewish life is not new in Jewish history. Throughout the period of the established *kehillah* in European countries, Jews governed themselves by law; and this meant conducting courts, imposing fines and other forms of punishment for violations. No one with any perspective on the Jewish past should be surprised to discover that the same need for preserving the integrity of the group is calling forth similar measures in our own day.

There are, however, some important differences between the present and the past in this regard. First, in order to get Jews to submit to sanctions, some code must exist which they accept, and which establishes reasonable demands. No such code exists today. In the past, rabbinical authority was universal; today it has all but ceased to operate. Second, the community structure itself must be so rebuilt as to include all Jews. In an anarchic setup, sanctions are impossible. The recent development in London and in Mexico, however, reveal that there is the will to defend the honor of the Jews, and that collective action to that end is on the agenda. With this will and this purpose, it should be possible to work out an effective method of communal control.

REALITIES AND VALUES

THE SAGA OF THE ADVENTURES encountered by the Jewish DP's in their irresistible drive toward their national home is full of stirring episodes. One of the most recent was the escape of six boys and one girl from the British concentration camp in Cyprus and their voyage in a tiny boat through stormy weather to the port of Haifa. May they find health, security and peace in their homeland, the only land that could be home for them.

▼

THE ESCAPE OF THE SEVEN young people from Cyprus calls attention to the scandal of the Cyprus concentration camps. An article by Dr. Paul Friedman, "The Road Back for the DP's," in the December issue of *Commentary,* tells of how the psychic wounds inflicted on these people by their soul-shattering experiences with the Nazis have been reopened by their cruel confinement on Cyprus. After describing the rapid recovery of those DP's who were fortunate enough to get to Eretz Yisrael shortly after their liberation, Dr. Friedman continues:

"As opposed to these quick recoveries, most survivors who have had to remain in the camps under continuous regimentation have grown more anxious and aggressive. . . .

"The camps on Cyprus are even worse in their effects. In contrast to the DP camps in Europe, inmates are not permitted outside the gates; and many other features are reminiscent of the German concentration camps. Situated on a strip of barren, sun-scorched earth, where the scarcity of water is always a source of anxiety, the immigrants are confined in circumstances of overcrowding and restriction of the worst kind. As ought to have been expected, the barbed wire of Cyprus has cruelly resulted in bringing back to many of the immigrants, either by association or restimulation of ingrained, conditioned responses, some of the behavior patterns of the concentration camps."

In a recent letter addressed to Attlee and Bevin, Henry Morgenthau says truly: "If the British people could see the intolerable conditions under which the Cyprus refugees live, they would demand that the refugees be freed to leave for Israel at once."

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AS A RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL minority, American Jewry has a big stake in getting action by state and federal legislative bodies on President Truman's Civil Rights program.

The American Jewish Congress is therefore to be commended for the publication by its Commission on Law and Social Action of the first complete listing of all the anti-discrimination laws in effect in the forty-eight states. The list digests over two hundred state anti-bias laws dealing with discrimination in public accommodations, private employment, education, housing, group defamation, etc.

The list reveals that New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Illinois and Massachusetts are in advance of other states in efforts to abolish unfair discrimination, that a majority of states "give only meagre protection to civil rights," and that four states—Kentucky, Montana, South Carolina and Virginia—*"have no statutes whatsoever on such matters."*

▼

RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES ought not to be, but unhappily often are, occasion for discord and strife. Such gestures of interfaith good will as are commonly made in America by religious and governmental leaders, are by no means common in other parts of the world. In Palestine, religious holidays have often

been occasion for outbursts of fanatic antagonisms, and many Christians have expressed their fear of what would happen if a Jewish "theocratic" state were to be set up in the Holy Land.

To us American Jews, it is gratifying—but by no means surprising—to find Israel following the American pattern. We are pleased to read in the papers that the facilities of Kol Yisrael (Voice of Israel), the Israeli broadcasting station, were used to broadcast the Christmas Eve services from the Church of the Ascension in Nazareth and that Ben-Gurion on Christmas extended official greetings to the Christian citizens of Israel.

Indeed, there is reason to believe that the improvement of inter-faith relations in the Holy Land is more likely to occur under a Jewish regime than under any other, because Judaism has never regarded adherence to Jewish religion as the sole means of attaining salvation.

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THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION FOR Israel makes due provisions for the free participation of the Arab minority in the political life of the country. But the forthcoming elections in Israel must necessarily take place before the constitution is adopted, since the House of Deputies that is elected is to serve as the constituent assembly. Were the Provisional Government disposed to be high-handed, it could easily take advantage of the existing situation to keep the Arabs out, particularly since many Arabs are reluctant to participate in the elections to avoid complications with Arabs outside of Israel.

Instead, however, the Provisional Government is seeking a way to insure Arab representation in the new government. As announced by Moshe Erem, director of the Department of Minority Relations, two possibilities for Arab participation exist: either placing of several Arab parties in the lists or the combination of certain Arab and Jewish parties with the inclusion of Arab candidates on the combined list. A bloc of three Arab groups—one a Moslem religious party and the other two labor bodies—has approached Hapoel Hamizrachi to negotiate the formation of a united religious-labor bloc of Jews and Arabs.

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AN INTERESTING LITURGICAL innovation, introduced in the Mount Washington Presbyterian Church in New York, is described in a release of *Religious News Service* (December 13, 1948). It is called a Sermon-in-Song and this is how it is described:

"Sermon-in-Song, opens with a solo, after which the spoken text and sacred songs alternate in developing the message. The music is integrated into the text so that the transition from speaking to singing is accomplished without a break in continuity."

Reading that description, one is reminded of the *maggidim,* the itinerent preachers of Eastern European Jewry, who, in impassioned moments, would chant rather than merely speak their message.

The writer of these lines recalls the impression made on him in his youth by the Yiddish Zionist orator, Zevi Hirsch Masliansky, who in America applied the style of the European *maggid,* and he can testify to the effectiveness of that kind of Sermon-in-Song.

Moby Dick and the Parable of Jonah

By JACOB J. WEINSTEIN

THE book of Jonah contains but four brief chapters. In the mighty cable of the Bible, it consitutes but a single strand. But it is a colorful strand. Its lesson was so profound as to win it a place in the service for the most important Holy Day of the year.

The Story of a Soured Prophet

We see from this book that the day of the great literary prophets is over. These men and their predecessors like Amos and Elijah were out-speaking men, men who had to prophesy or burst, who spoke forth no matter what the cost might be to them. In Jonah we come upon a professional reformer who looks upon his work as a business. He evidently thinks that he can pick and choose his assignments. And when the call comes for him to go to Nineveh, a great capital of a powerful empire and bring the backsliding Ninevites back to God, Jonah decides to take a walk. He believes that if he can get passage to Tarshish at the western end of the Mediterranean, he will somehow escape the surveillance of God. He must have learned very little about his God; thought of Him as one having limited authority. So he booked passage on a ship and went down into the hold to sleep his guilty sleep. But God cannot be escaped. He is the "Hound of Heaven" who "with unhurrying chase and unperturbed pace, deliberate speed, majestic instancy" overtakes the refugee and whispers in his ear: "All things betray thee, who betrayest Me." God sends a great wind to plague and pursue the ship which carries the contraband Jonah. Adversity sometimes makes a man. So it does with Jonah. For now, recognizing that he must be the cause of this calamity, he readily admits that he is a Hebrew and worships the God who made the sea and the dry land, and further confesses that his disobedience of God is the cause of the calamity. The rough sailors, mark you, are impressed by this courageous honesty. Let those who would hide their Jewishness remember this. They do all they can to pull out of the storm. They jettison their cargo, they pull frantically on the oars, but there is no help. There is nothing for them to do but to heave Jonah overboard, reluctantly, to be sure. The storm is abated. Jonah hardly plummets into the water when he is swallowed by a great fish which the Lord has prepared and out of the belly of the fish Jonah utters this great prayer, a prayer worthy of the Psalmists and of Job:

"And the flood was about me
All Thy waves and Thy billows
Passed over me,
And I said: "I am cast out
From before Thine eyes
Yet I will look again
Toward Thy holy temple.
The water compassed me about
Even to the soul.
The deep was round about me . . . .
Yet hast Thou brought up my life
From the pit, O Lord my God. . . .

It has been the peculiar fate of this story that its form has overshadowed its content. It is as though a Tintoretto miniature were placed in a gaudy gilt frame so that everyone noticed the frame but overlooked the details of the masterpiece. Innumerable sermons have been preached by Fundamentalists to prove that the whale could have housed Jonah for three days in an upper colonic apartment. As many sermons have been

preached by liberal ministers that a great fish need not mean a whale and that anyway this was but a parable. Let us not be snared by the colorful incidentals of this tale. We want to probe its essence.

So Jonah is vomited up on the shore and accepts his mission to Nineveh. He arrives at Nineveh and begins his preaching and to his annoyed surprise the people take heed of his warnings, put on sackcloth and ashes and promise to change their ways. Most reformers would have been proud of such an achievement. They would have boasted of the number of souls they had converted. Imagine Billy Sunday or Aimee Semple McPherson and what they would have done with such a result! But not Jonah! He has become soured on life. The little dunking in the brine and the three-day sojourn in the stomach of the big fish did not leave a very lasting impression. Men are things that think a little but chiefly forget. Somewhere along the line, Jonah has been traumatized by the evidence of the inveterate rascality and unrepentent cussedness of the human being. He doubts that the Ninevites have been genuinely converted. He thinks they are putting on a show to deceive their God.

It is a peculiar thing, is it not, that the people who have the lowest opinion about their fellow men have the highest opinion about themselves. They soon act as gods deciding who shall live and who shall die. Yes, Jonah has come to the point where he feels superior to God. God is a softie, he concludes. He will always be taken in by a few hypocrite crocodile tears. But not he — no, not Jonah. In his sight man is hardly worth the fire and brimstone to destroy him. So God teaches Jonah a lesson. Jonah needs a bit of perspective, and with this perspective he might gain a little tolerance, and with tolerance a measure of compassion and with compassion perhaps a glimmer of love.

God causes a gourd which has given Jonah a bit of shade to be destroyed by a worm. Jonah weeps over the fate of the gourd. The Lord then admonishes Jonah:

> "Thou hast had pity for the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night; and should I not have pity on Nineveh, that great city wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle?"

This admonition should be hung over the gates of every university and should be emblazoned on the soft under-belly of the Zeppelin which noses into our sky every now and then. It should be a very timely reminder to those who, especially during election campaigns, become very disgusted with the educability of the human species. The Lord has a saner perspective. He has seen how far we have come from the primal swamp. He recognizes how very much man has lifted himself up by his own bootstraps. He sees how powerful are the jungle calls and the cave instincts. He can afford to have compassion. He can afford to wait. In His sight, man has taken but a few eye blinks to come as far as he has come.

How Melville's Father Mapple Interpreted Jonah

This story made a powerful impression on one of America's most gifted writers of the last century, Herman Melville. In Moby Dick, Melville does a graceful obeisance to God's side of the debate, but comes out with a thick loud thump for Jonah's position that man is unregenerate and doomed to destruction. Perhaps nowhere has the lesson of the book of Jonah been so eloquently stated as by Father

Mapple in that quaint New Bedford Chapel which was built like a ship, the pulpit like a prow ascended by a ship's ladder. Rightly so, thought Melville, "For the pulpit is ever this earth's foremost part; all the rest comes in its rear; the pulpit leads the world. From thence it is that the storm of God's quick wrath is first descried, and the bow must bear the earliest brunt. From thence it is that the God of breezes fair or foul is first invoked for favorable winds. Yes, the world's a ship on its passage out, and not a voyage complete; and the pulpit is its prow."

Father Mapple who once went down to the sea in whaling ships is the right man, obviously, to tell the Jonah story. And he tells it with a saltiness that would hardly be proper in these pages but which carried an Old Testament earthiness that New England sea-faring folk could well appreciate. And the lesson he extracts from this old tale he eagerly applies to himself as a preacher of the word of God. This is the way he states it:

"Shipmates, God has laid but one hand upon you; both his hands press upon me. I have read ye, by what murky light may be mine, the lesson that Jonah teaches to all sinners; and therefore to ye, and still more to me, for I am a greater sinner than ye. And now how gladly would I come down from this masthead and sit on the hatches there where you sit, and listen as you listen, while some one of you reads me that other and more awful lesson which Jonah teaches to me, as a pilot of the living God. How being an anointed pilot-prophet, or speaker of true things, and bidden by the Lord to sound those unwelcome truths in the ears of a wicked Nineveh, Jonah, appalled at the hostility he should raise, fled from his mission, and sought to escape his duty and his God by taking ship at Joppa. But God is everywhere; Tarshish he never reached. As we have seen, God came upon him in the whale, and swallowed him down to living gulfs of doom, and with swift slantings tore him along 'into the midst of the seas,' where the eddying depths sucked him ten thousand fathoms down, and 'the weeds were wrapped about his head,' and all the watery world of woe bowled over him. Yet even then beyond the reach of any plummet—'out of the belly of hell'—when the whale grounded upon the ocean's utmost bones, even then, God heard the engulfed, repenting prophet when he cried. Then God spake unto the fish; and from the shuddering cold and blackness of the sea, the whale came breeching up towards the warm and pleasant sun, and all the delights of air and earth; and 'vomited out Jonah upon the dry land'; when the word of the Lord came a second time; and Jonah, bruised and beaten—his ears, like two sea-shells, still multitudinously murmuring of the ocean—Jonah did the Almighty's bidding. And what was that shipmates? To preach the truth to the face of Falsehood! That was it!

"This, shipmates, this is that other lesson; and woe to that pilot of the living God who slights it. Woe to him whom this world charms from Gospel duty! Woe to him who seeks to pour oil upon the waters when God has brewed them into a gale! Woe to him who seeks to please rather than to appal! Woe to him whose good name is more to him than goodness! Woe to him who, in this world, courts not dishonor! Woe to him who would not be true, even though to be false were salvation! Yea, woe to him who, as the great Pilot Paul has it, while preaching to others is himself a castaway!"

Melville vs. Father Mapple and the Author of the Book of Jonah

Melville himself was not convinced by Father Mapple. He believed that man was an unregenerate primitive, worse

than that! — that so-called civilized man was hopelessly debauched, that he could never return to the simple and sometimes attractive animality of the primitive. Historic man was ever in pursuit of Moby Dick, the White Whale—the core of violence in the midst of the seas and he was doomed to be swallowed up by this violent fiend as Ahab and Quequeg, and Starbuck and Stubb were swallowed up by Moby Dick because the lust for battle was in the heart of the pursuer—because the heart of man is the wild ocean in which lies the perennial disturber—now lazily dozing in kelpy deeps, now turbulently slashing the water on the surface. We, of our generation, thought once that we had captured the White Whale, that with a harpoon called World War I we had made him fast to the Whaler Ship, the League of Nations. He tore away from that tow line taking harpoon and ship. Then we struck him with harpoon, World War II, and towed him with a longer line to Whaler Ship — United Nations. The White Whale has not been subdued yet. He is tugging at the line. If we believe Melville, and Jonah and Mr. Freud, he will always break loose and is bound eventually to suck our whole civilization into the oblivion of the ocean's depths.

I prefer the faith of Father Mapple to the negative pessimism of Melville. He ended his sermon as I shall end mine with this declaration of faith from the prow of his pulpit:

"Delight is to him—a far, far upward, and inward delight — who against the proud gods and commodores of this earth, ever stands forth his own inexorable self. Delight is to him whose strong arms yet support him, when the ship of this base treacherous world has gone down beneath him. Delight is to him, who gives no quarter in the truth, and kills, burns, and destroys all sin though he pluck it out from under the robes of Senators and Judges. Delight, — top-gallant delight is to him, who acknowledges no law or lord, but the Lord his God, and is only a patriot to heaven. Delight is to him, whom all the waves of the billows of the seas of the boisterous mob can never shake from this sure Keel of the Ages. And eternal delight and deliciousness will be his, who coming to lay him down, can say with his final breath—O Father! —chiefly known to me by Thy rod— mortal or immortal, here I die. I have striven to be Thine, more than to be this world's, or mine own. Yet this is nothing; I leave eternity to Thee; for what is man that he should live out the lifetime of his God?"

The fathers said it more prosaicly in *Pirke Abot*: "The work is long, the day is short and the Master of the House is urgent. It is not thy obligation to complete the work, but neither art thou free to desist from it."

A Layman Speaks Out

By LAWRENCE W. CROHN

CONSERVATIVE Judaism seems to welcome any theoretical discussion of basic Jewish doctrine. Anyone is free to talk about God, Bible, Tradition, Life and Death. Except for the devoutly Orthodox Jew, there seems no limit to any inquiry into the validity of the most time-honored ideas. The principle of economic determinism has been applied to Jewish history, and other advanced views have been proposed to prove that Judaism is an evolving civilization. When Prof. Schechter enunciated his famous concept of Catholic Israel, it was seized upon by Conservative rabbis as the declaration of a new order of things—a modern method of evaluating the trends in a fast changing Jewish scene. But this has led to much discussion rather than to any actual reforms, and the official practices of the Conservative wing differ little from those of Orthodox Judaism.

The Need for Bolder Action in Revising Ritual Usage

The Reconstructionist group has been boldest and most outspoken in charting a theory of Jewish life for our time. With reverence and understanding for tradition, Dr. Kaplan and his associates have succeeded in setting up a constructive approach to the intellectual problem which faces modern Jewry. And despite much carping and destructive criticism, the idea of Judaism as a religious civilization is taking root in America—not, to be sure, among millions of people, but among great numbers of Jews who are seeking a method of adjustment.

It is surprising, therefore, that the boldness and intellectual stamina which creates movements, stops short abruptly when faced with the task of evaluating and reconstructing Jewish usages and practices. There is some lip service to the need for change, but the efforts to effect change have been timid ones. New practices like Consecration, Oneg Shabbat, and even Bat Mitzvah are freely introduced. But the rabbinate is afraid to touch the problems of *kashrut,* Passover observances, Shabbat observances, marriage and divorce.

It would be evidence of downright ignorance were one to deny the sacred character which these usages have attained through the ages. The very inner core of Judaism seems to be bound up with the great accumulation of laws which govern these venerable practices. The flavor and texture of Jewish life emanates from the long line of ordinances which purpose to interpret the Word of God, as given to Moses, the great lawgiver. To change the structure of Jewish law and tradition cannot be undertaken lightly.

However, a spiritual earthquake has already occurred. Most intelligent Jews are far, far removed from the world which created the codes and practices that still govern our religious usages. We face the cold fact that the vast majority of American Jews have given up, or are in the process of relinquishing, nearly all Jewish observances. To our fathers, we would be a generation of sinners. Many of the older generation are disposed to blame America for the un-Jewishness of the younger, but that solves no problems. Jewish observances have lost meaning for many Jews, and instead of ex-

periencing the joy of the *mitzvot,* they think of them only as burdens.

Yet there is still much emotional warmth of feeling for Jewish tradition. We witness on occasions violent controversies over synagogue rituals by those who otherwise break hundreds of rules prescribed for believing Jews. There is much confusion on the Jewish scene. But the situation will deteriorate unless there are leaders ready to deal with Jewish practices at least as boldly as they treat the fundamental concepts of Judaism.

A Constructive Approach to the Problem

Judaism must have its forms and customs. Mere ideals will evaporate without the day-by-day usages that give color and substance to our culture. Yet the problem cannot be put in the simple terms of making Judaism easy. A more positive approach is needed, one that aims at determining what ceremonies have meaning for us, and are esthetically satisfying. The all-or-nothing demands of the Fundamentalists have no place in a modern version of Jewish life. Indeed this attitude has estranged many Jews on the assumption that, once the law has been broken by one tittle, there is no further use to observe any of it.

In attempting to adapt ritual observances to present-day needs, it seems that two principles are in order: (1) to preserve the inner essence of the practice, and (2) either to retain the traditional character of the custom or to substitute some new folk-way for it. Some practices will be found to have outlived their usefulness. Many of our customs, however, can be re-interpreted and—to use a rather abused term—streamlined to meet the needs of thinking Jews. If it be presumptuous for a layman to write of these problems, be it so, provided it will help to bring into the open the crying need for courageous discussion. The lay view is important in an age when the rabbinate has few ecclesiastical sanctions to fall back upon. Judaism can survive only if it is acceptable to Jews. In times gone by, Jews who strayed from the fold were adjudged "wicked" and were liable to be "cut off from their people." There must be different methods today to elicit the loyalty and devotion of thinking Jews.

Simplifying the Dietary Laws

Of all Jewish practices, the dietary laws present the most difficult problem to deal with. The multiplicity of these laws and the emphasis placed upon them are difficult for the modern Jew to comprehend. Modern rabbis have tried to construct a rational basis for their retention, but with little practical success. The argument runs that these practices are necessary in order to preserve our identity, that they imply a sense of holiness in Jewish life, and that, anyway, we have no authority to change them. Concerning the need to emphasize Jewish identity, many will see in the creation of the State of Israel a new and vivid focus of Jewish life, which may in time nullify many of the practices of traditional Judaism. And a renewed dedication to the welfare of World Jewry, to the uplift of Jewish life in America and to a renewal of the Jewish spirit will, it is hoped, brighten the drabness which now pervades the American Jewish scene.

Nevertheless, there is at least symbolic meaning for us in the dietary laws. The laws of *kashrut* are deeply rooted in Jewish sacred literature. Originally, a *mamlekhet kohanim"* (kingdom of priests) was expected to abstain from certain foods which were viewed as especially profane. A holy people, having a

special covenant with God, was enjoined to observe a strict regimen, which covered every aspect of life. Ancient Jews conceived the idea that life is holy since God is the creator of life. It is in this spirit that we can seek the meaning of *kashrut* for our time. We do not think of ourselves any more as a chosen people, but we may still choose to symbolize in our daily lives the inner holiness of life which is of the essence of Judaism. The manner in which we do this is our business and need not be explicable in rationalistic terms. A Jew then who believes in preserving Jewish tradition and who sees in the dietary laws a symbol of our dedication to the uplift of the human spirit will want to observe some aspects of *kashrut*. It is not the purpose here to attempt a long discourse on the meaning of these dietary laws. But if there is meaning, as the writer believes there is, what shall be done to gain the adherence of a decent segment of modern Jewry?

Since, at most, *kashrut* remains for us only a symbol, it is asking the impossible to expect adherence to the whole complex of ritualistic law. All-or-nothing will wreck everything. It is strange how Jews have unofficially provided clues we need. The whole world knows that Jews do not eat the flesh of certain animals. This is a simple fact, which is widely identified with the religion of the Jews. Therefore the observance of this one aspect of the dietary customs, if widely kept, would do much to re-institute this ancient symbol into the daily life of our people. Far better a general acceptance of this one essential than complete nullification of the whole dietary regimen. This will appear to some to be a radical suggestion, but it is conservative, because it is intended to save a valued Jewish folk-way. To many of the sincerest Jews, the system of *shohetim*, *mashgihim*, *vaade kashrut* and kosher shops is anything but edifying, with extra high prices as added penalties for being Jews. The argument about not breaking sharply with the past is baseless, since these laws are rejected by the vast majority of Jews, in any case.

Simplifying Pesah Observances

The question of *kashrut* has been discussed at some length to illustrate a principle which can be applied also to other fundamental Jewish usages. Take the Passover observances. The meaning of this festival is very relevant to Jews and non-Jews. Its place in Jewish tradition is unquestioned. A wider acceptance of the symbol of unleavened bread would do much to enhance the significance of Passover for modern Jews. But the vast overlay of ritual law resulting from the literal interpretation of the Mosaic commandment has all but erased the wide observance of this time-honored rite. The Seder ceremony has held its ground because it is plausible and its meaning is manifest to everyone. Likewise, the simplification of the unleavened bread rite will, it seems, preserve this usage, rather than destroy it. Abstention from bread and bread products, the eating of Matzot, religiously, by millions of Jews during Passover—this is an attainable goal. To ask for more is to be unrealistic and even naive. At present, many who still observe the Seder, eat bread at their favorite restaurants the next day. The reason is still given, that, since the utensils are not changed, there is no use in attempting to keep the Passover outside the home. Doubtless many of these honest people saw their fathers "sell" the *hometz* to their Gentile neighbors. Let us reconstruct the hallowed

customs of Pesah observance before they entirely disappear.

The Problem of Sabbath and Holiday Observance

The need to reexamine the myriad of taboos connected with the Sabbath has long been recognized. Most of these are nullified by the circumstances of modern living. How to make the Jewish Sabbath meaningful to us is indeed a problem, but some paths have been charted already. As more people are freed from labor on Saturday, the synagogue must offer a service that is traditional, meaningful and attractive. Friday night is widely looked upon as home night, even by Jews who are far removed from the synagogue. Club meetings, discussion groups in the synagogue or elsewhere are spreading. The *Oneg Shabbat* is a new advance. Classes in Jewish history and in Hebrew fit into the spirit of the day.

In Jewish law the Sabbath takes precedence over the festivals. Nevertheless, we should press for wider observance of our holidays. Better attendance in the synagogues, and new ways to celebrate the three festivals should be sought. Perhaps the customs of Eretz Yisrael will be adopted and we shall celebrate Sukkot with pilgrimages to the country. Our festivals need not be connected entirely with the synagogue. They should be made to invigorate the totality of Jewish life.

Adapting Jewish Usage to Jewish Needs

Our usages must be subjected to the needs of Jews. It will probably be said that the thesis of this paper is just a rehash of Reform Judaism. In the first place, it must be stated that the concept of Reform is a noble one, indeed. The word need not scare us. If the original Reform movement was premature or was guided by wrong principles, that is no reason for us to stay our hand. The yardstick of loyalty to tradition, to the wholeness of Jewish life, including the center in Israel, and to the spiritual values of the Jewish religion is easy to recognize. The Reform movement which began in the last century seemed obsessed with the idea of fitting Judaism into the pattern of the modern state, and in the process, did damage to Jewish life. Reconstructionism is concerned with the need to make Judaism mean a great deal to us. The negative approach has been dropped, and, instead, we face these problems positively.

There are many more laws which either need to be dropped or changed to meet the needs of our time. Those discussed merely touch the fringe of the immediate questions which face the rabbinate and those laymen who care. In revising the Prayer Book a courageous step was taken. And it is obvious that Judaism has not been destroyed thereby.

Jewish life is not disintegrating, and there is a growing American Judaism. Yet events crowd one upon the other. The need to revise our usages will increase. We in this generation still retain some of the vitality and understanding of the Judaism of the destroyed European centers. We owe it to the next generation to make a firm beginning. When we consider, on the one hand, the completely different world we live in, with the changed attitude of most Jews, and then read about some of the disputations in rabbinical circles concerning such matters as *agunah* or *halitzah,* one wonders if our rabbis are in touch with reality.

Granting all the difficulties and the need to preserve a high degree of unity in all Israel, the malady still remains and needs to be cured. Some group must take

the lead and promulgate opinions regarding the importance of certain usages, as against the unimportance of certain others. And in the process, it would be wise to stress those usages that are more closely related to the ethical problems of our times. For in the final analysis, the need is to relate our customs more directly to our aesthetic and moral wants. A Jew should *use* Judaism for his welfare and that of humanity. Some would use Jews to preserve the faith of our fathers. There is a great difference between these two attitudes.

The problems here presented are the concern of Jews who want to be loyal, but have not found the proper formula. Those who can still speak of the Bible as the "Divine Word," in a literal sense have no such need. To them it is simply a matter of the will to perform all the *mitzvot* prescribed by the *Shulhan Arukh*. The over-all needs of the Jewish people and the interest in its tradition will preserve the essential customs of all Israel. But for an ever widening segment of Jewry, the Jewish system must be unravelled and clarified, and above all, new forms welcomed, so that each generation will witness a rebirth of Jewish life. We who are still close to the problem must chart the path which others can follow. The reconstruction of the intellectual foundations of Judaism is the primary need. Following this, our practices and customs must be studied in the same spirit, and with as much courage. There must be wider acceptance of Jewish usages, but this cannot happen until drastic changes are made. It is hard, even presumptuous to tamper with a tradition which stems from such a sacred past, hallowed by the blood of our ancestors. But it is because of our love for Judaism that we need to be forthright in dealing with this pressing problem.

AN INTERESTING HISTORICAL ANALOGY

The beginning of the Reformation in Germany had forced the Catholic Church to reconsider its own position, the easy-going tolerance of the Renaissance period being thus succeeded by the bigotry of the Catholic Reaction. All the anti-Jewish restrictions of the Middle Ages, never before regarded very seriously in Rome, were now put into force with savage conscientiousness. . . .

The result was wholesale, almost universal, ruin—much similar to what happened in Germany when the Nazis enforced their anti-Semitic legislation after 1933. Those who had formerly been considered the communal magnates were beggared. Professional men were driven out of business. The small manufactures had to be closed down. Hardly any channel of livelihood was left open. . . . As in the twentieth century the problem of the refugee and of lands of refuge was uppermost in the mind of every sensitive and conscientious Jew.

This was the state of affairs in the Jewish world when Don Joseph Nasi was engaged in his Palestinian experiment; and the implications were obvious in the sixteenth century as they were to be in the twentieth—the people without a land should be directed to the land without a people.

From *The House of Nasi: The Duke of Naxos,* by Cecil Roth, reprinted through the courtesy of the Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1948. $4.00.

Judaism's Share in Achieving American Religious Freedom

By FRANCES BURNCE

AMERICAN history has too often been taught from over-simplified texts presenting a pattern woven wholly of Anglo-Saxon threads. The student generally ends his history training convinced that this heritage is responsible for settling a continent, for establishing an independent nation, for imbuing it with religious and political liberty. This deeply engraved influence has brought America to the side of the British not only in two world wars but currently to bolster the Empire in its present crisis.

Ground, however, has been broken in recent years for a more realistic view of the forces that shaped the founding of the Republic. *The American Overture* by Abraham Vossen Goodman is a contribution to such a view.* Three centuries ago the lure of hope that the New World would give the Jews as well as others a chance for "a better life in a better land" brought them here. Their scant material wealth was compensated for by rich gifts of a different character: much of the best of European culture, a millenium and more of civilized living, a profound spiritual religion, and social and humanitarian values toward which man is still striving. The significance of such forces in the establishment of the United States of America cannot be exaggerated, even though, as Rabbi Goodman holds, some Jews were not so richly endowed.

The frontier and the distance from European sources were important factors in evolving the American ideal. The dominant role was played, however, by human beings, among whom stood the Jews. In this reevaluation of the shaping of America, the contribution of the Jew is "less understood than that of any other major ethnic element in the United States." (Channing: "History of the United States.") To this a recent historian adds: "Three decades have gone by since Channing made these discouraging remarks. But the lapse of time has not added to the total fund of our available knowledge of the American Jewish past." (Oscar Handlin, *Commentary*, February, 1948.)

The student, Jewish or non-Jewish, who is interested in efforts to fill the gap, to evaluate the amalgam that helped launch in this country the world's greatest experiment in government, will welcome Rabbi Goodman's thoroughly authenticated, enlightening, sober, and moving story of the struggle of the Jew for what became an especially precious cornerstone of the Republic—religious freedom. Rabbi Goodman's *American Overture* will be found an important link for understanding the chain of events in colonial history that resulted in independence as well as freedom of worship.

Barring the interesting sidelights on life in each of the thirteen colonies, as well as on the personalities and their philosophies among the colonists, the *American Overture* essentially is the record of the thousand Jews—more or less—from Massachusetts to Georgia, from each colony's inception to the day when all became a united nation. As the record unfolds, the reader finds himself obliged to revise certain traditional notions concerning the hospitality or inhospitality of certain colonies to the

* *The American Overture*, by Abraham Vossen Goodman. Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1948. $3.00.

newcomer, especially to the Jew. Here Massachusetts is a striking example. Harshness toward Quaker, Catholic, and "left-wing" Protestant has long been the badge of Massachusetts. But her treatment of the Jew who filtered in, Rabbi Goodman shows, differs widely from the pattern of intolerance usually ascribed to her. Again, in sharp contrast to the paeans of praise sounded for Rhode Island's gifts of freedom, we see a Jew, as late as 1776, flash a penetrating light on one darkened corner there. "I am an Israelite," this Jew said, "and I am not allowed the liberty of a vote or voice in common with the rest of the voters." Nevertheless, in a day of quotas and other restrictions on Jews in the field of higher education, colonial Rhode Island gave promise and fulfillment of opportunity. The College of Rhode Island — Brown University in later date — neither locked nor barred doors even to the unelect who desired academic training in her halls.

Rabbi Goodman takes us from colony to colony in the Jews' quest for freedom. We find in the account the dramatic, the curious, the gracious, something of the tragic, and, alongside it, a touch of the comic on the road to human stature. Acquiring the "Burgher Right" under crotchy Stuyvesant combines many of these elements. Freedom of trade to Jews did not, according to the governor include retail trade; bearing arms could not be granted the Jew lest he acquire the mantle of full citizenship. That Stuyvesant's domain became in the end the home for the largest Jewish community the world over—due in no small measure to the gift of free "religious profession and worship — within the state to all mankind" — was something, of course, that the Governor could not foresee. But Jews hold no grudge against him; they carry on to this day his injunction that they take care of their needy.

As Rabbi Goodman points out, the restrictions on freedom of conscience might have been least expected in the "Holy Experiment" of William Penn. "What ground can there be," he had asked, "why some, and not all, should be tolerated?" Moreover, the Jews drew from him "tender compassion." But in the actual administration of the colony, voters, as well as officials, had to be Christians. As a historian of the Quakers bluntly put it: "While freedom of worship was permitted to all, it was intended to make Pennsylvania's government one of and for Orthodox Protestant Christians only." In spite of restrictions Philadelphia grew and became the largest of the colonial cities, exceeding in numbers those of any metropolis of Great Brtain — London alone excepted. Although but few Jews settled in Philadelphia, there were among them some who became widely known. The Graetz family, through Rebecca, is the most romantic, linked as it is with Washington Irving, Walter Scott, and to a lesser degree, Thackeray.

The liberty of conscience granted by the crown colony of New Jersey to all but papists did not go uncriticized. When Quakers were allowed the franchise, the crown was petitioned to override the concession. Just why one Jew was a signer of the petition, is not given. Rabbi Goodman's generalization at this point bears further probing: "The Jew," he comments, "sought to limit the amount of religious liberty enjoyed by others," when his own rights were not circumscribed.

Apparently Jews of the middle belt—Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware —made greater contributions to linking the hinterland of the Ohio and the Mississippi valleys to the Atlantic coast than they did to the development of religious freedom. Nevertheless, there are records of Jews staunchly holding to their faith, struggling step by step for the right of

conforming to their religion—establishing cemeteries, erecting synagogues—to final and full religious liberty.

The checkered career of Maryland in the matter of religious freedom—as far as the Jews for one group is concerned—is highlighted by the fantastic story of the "Jew Doctor," Jacob Lombroso. His career as fully detailed by Rabbi Goodman adds little to Jewish prestige or, indeed, to the interest of the fate that met Calvert's aim in founding the colony. Curiously, the regime proved brutal to Catholics while Jews were granted resident privileges and some religious toleration. The latter had to wait till long after the Revolution, however, for full emancipation in Maryland.

The agrarian economy of colonial Virginia attracted few Jews. North Carolina had no desire for Jewish settlers. In sharp contrast to the attitude of this colony, we find that South Carolina wrote a remarkably hospitable chapter in the story of liberty of conscience for Jews. In Charleston, for one thing, the second Jewish house of worship in the country was erected. Of even greater significance, from a lay point of of view, was the fact that South Carolina elected the first Jew in American history, and—as Rabbi Goodman points out—"probably the first Jew in the modern world, to serve in an elected office." Francis Salvador, the Jew in question, was elected by his district to the First and Second Continental Congresses. A milestone, indeed!

Ashkenazic Jews will get a chuckle out of their history in Georgia. In the wake of the first boatload of immigrants to Oglethorpe's holdings, there arrived another boat filled with Jews. Although the entire colony was saved by the devoted work of a Jewish physician, the Georgian colony bombarded the trustees in London to take "some vigorous resolutions to suppress the evil" of Jewish settlers. Prejudice created obstacles to Jewish progress in the colony. The major fight for equality was waged, however, with the authorities in London rather than within the colony itself, Rabbi Goodman makes evident. Eventually Jews were accepted as desirable citizens and reached the goal of religious and civic liberty with the years.

Religious freedom was not attained by Jews in the various colonies with uniform ease or hardship. The latter predominated. But the dawn of a new day was visible when, at the Independence Day celebration, representatives of all the colonies saw "the clergy of different Christian denominations with the rabbi of the Jews walking arm in arm" for the first time. A propitious omen, surely, for the new nation.

The *American Overture* is alight with Jewish names already familiar in American Jewish history; many, however, are not so easily recalled. Wheat and some chaff are in the assortment. Sources for personalities and events were provided by the records of the colonies. Many of these showed that the only objection to the Jew was the fear that he would "bedevil" a community by adding another sect therein. Altogether, these records lead to the judgment that only a people steeped in the belief in God, determined to overcome hardships, indeed, to *live* could have rooted in that rocky soil at times so unnecessarily inhospitable.

Tolerant minds, however, were becoming more numerous with the years. Great issues transcending forms, Rabbi Goodman points out, were crystallizing. To embody the dream of independence in reality, the aid of all men of good-will was necessary. Here the Jew fitted in admirably.

Finally, the *American Overture* is a brief, objective, succinct account of Jewish

struggles against the hydra-headed evil of religious intolerance. Rabbi Goodman's work offers a fruitful source book of colonial days for Jew and Gentile alike. The reader lays down the significant little volume with the added hope that the *Overture* is a prelude to orchestrating Freedom in all its forms for Jew everywhere, for man everywhere. As Rabbi Goodman puts it: "When the colonies first recognized the Jew as a man, and as an equal, they made a covenant in the heavens for justice and brotherhood. . . . May it never be forgotten."

Random Thoughts

It is not unusual these days to see a holly-wreath hung on a mezuzzah or to hear a Jewish woman ask the clerk at the toy store for a Hanukkah lamp which she promised to give her child for Christmas.

* * *

According to Joseph Albo, the Jewish philosopher in fifteenth century Spain, there is as little point to giving a book to a woman as a spindle to a man or a sword to a boy.

Needless to say, there were no Book of the Month Clubs in Albo's world.

* * *

There is a large output in Eretz Yisrael of Hebrew books dealing with the history, life and culture of the Arabs.

There is none, to our knowledge, dealing with American Jewry.

Which only proves that a near neighbor, however troublesome, counts for more than a distant brother, however helpful.

* * *

Thus far society has not found a third alternative to being either atomized or automatized.

* * *

It is not the in-take but the digestion of knowledge that constitutes education.

* * *

Human life looks as little like what one reads about it in the books by which one is revolted as it does like what one reads about it in the books by which one is uplifted.

* * *

It is natural and just for the Anglo-Saxon spirit to be predominant in American life, but not dominant.

* * *

Anyone who maintains that the human being is essentially irrational probably thinks he is making a rational statement.

He therefore cannot be human.

Does he then regard himself as superhuman?

* * *

A philosophy of life becomes dated as soon as people cease to be bothered by the questions to which it was an answer.

* * *

Man-made evil will exist as long as the imponderables will carry less weight than the ponderables.

* * *

Organized religion has been quite content to rest with God the case of human equality and dignity, instead of taking the trouble to give them mundane reality.

That is borne out in a little book called "Church Union," by John R. Scotford, where we read the following:

"The churches of the average community fall into three groups. First are the society churches: Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregational, Unitarian (in New England). Then there are the churches of the common people: Methodist, Baptist,

Disciples, Lutheran. Last come the other-side-of-the-tracks churches: Church of God, Nazarene, Pentecostal, foreign speaking."

When organized religion succeeds in disorganizing snobbishness, we shall have the Kingdom of God.

* * *

The Christian poets and theologians whose sadistic fantasies reveled in the descriptions of the eternal torments to which the damned were subjected in hell provided the blue prints and programs for the modern concentration camps.

* * *

Being a minority is not necessarily being the lesser evil.

* * *

One of the functions of the Civil Liberties Union seems to be that of making sure that hate-mongers be allowed at large to poison the minds of all and sundry.

* * *

A new form of absentee landlordism is the recent increase in synagogue membership accompanied by a decrease in synagogue attendance.

* * *

Among the principal reasons for joining a synagogue nowadays are being in line for a seat for the holidays and celebrating there a son's bar-mitzvah or a daughter's wedding.

* * *

Any audience worth its salt uses some grains of it in taking the chairman's introduction of the guest speaker.

* * *

Horace Mann could imagine only one outcome of public school education: the emptying of all the prisons.

The trouble with utopians is that they have a one-track mind.

They fail to realize that, when their favorite project arrives at its destination, it is sure to find there a large number of tracks to any one of which the local station-master may switch it and divert it from its original purpose.

* * *

The term *moral holiday* is a euphemism for an immoral one.

* * *

When Chaplin wanted to go in for more serious pictures, he said to Max Eastman: "As one grows older he wants to do something that will give him some spiritual satisfaction. I hate the word 'spiritual', but you know what I mean."

There is much that is rotten in a society in which it is unnatural to be spiritual.

M.M.K.

Correspondence

Christmas no Concern of Jews

Sirs:

Why all this fuss about Christmas? Are we slowly trying to talk or write ourselves into a pseudo-celebration of a holiday alien to our faith? Of pagan origin or not, Christmas is not for us a happy historic event.

Can we as Americans find any excuse to celebrate the Soviet achievement of power in Russia?

Does Great Britain celebrate the birth of Washington?

I assure you that Christianity would compromise itself much less were it to join us in our fast of Yom Kippur than do we when we participate ever so slightly in Christmas. Unfortunately, business as a whole has taken over the matter of Christmas and has made of it a means to an increase in the sale of merchandise.

Hanukkah is not a "Jewish Christmas" any more than Passover is a "Jewish Easter." We all know that each has a different background, a different ideology, a different interpretation, and a different form of celebration. We should call to mind one of the Ten Commandments and *not covet* our neighbor's holidays.

MOSES J. EISENBERG, Brookline, Mass.

We agree with Dr. Eisenberg that the ob-

servance of Christmas in any form in the Jewish home or in Jewish communal institutions or organizations has no justification and that the tendency to equate Hanukkah with Christmas and Pesah with Easter is both stupid and harmful. But the fact that that tendency exists points to a problem in interfaith relations which cannot be dismissed. Particularly is this true of the question of Christmas in the public schools, precisely because they are *public* and because American Jewry is a part, but not the whole nor even the majority, of that public. That does not mean that we are committed to the views on the problem expressed by the authors of articles which appear in our magazine. It does mean that we recognize the problem as a real one, and the views expressed as worthy of consideration.

EDITORS

Approves Our Suggestion on Future of the Shekel

Sirs:

I read your suggestion with regard to the shekel payments to the Hebrew University with much interest. I think it is a stroke of brilliancy. Keep after it.

MAURICE B. HEXTER,
Executive Vice-President,
Federation of Jewish Philanthropies,
New York, N. Y.

In Defense of the Irgun

Sirs:

I have always admired the clear thinking and logical reasoning of your editorials, but, I regret to say that your reasoning in your editorial dealing with Irgun and Menachem Beigin, is, to my mind, faulty. For, how can you call a group of people that were willing to give their lives for defending the honor and freedom of their people, terrorists?

Would you call the men that fought in the underground forces in the last war terrorists? Were it not for those men, we might have lost the war, and were it not for the Irgun, I honestly believe that the Jews of Palestine would still be under the domination of Great Britain.

Your remark that the Irgun group held their lives cheap, is in my opinion very rash and unjustified, for no person holds his life cheap. It takes a person with a high conception of idealism to sacrifice his life for the ideal he believes in. I admit that they made blunders and at times they did act irrationally, but then, we must remember the dictum of our sages, not to judge people unless we find ourselves in the same circumstances. Perhaps we, too, would act in the same way. You quote the Bible on the incident of Shechem that infuriated Jacob. Let me also quote to you the statement in the Bible that God drowned the Egyptians in the Red Sea. Rashi comments saying that God punished people with measure for measure, and because Pharaoh ordered every new born Jewish male cast into the river, therefore, God drowned the Egyptians in the Red Sea. So, to my mind, the Irgun was justified in some of the measure it took in dealing with the Palestine Administration.

By the way, I almost forgot to tell you that I am not a Revisionist. I am a General Zionist and have been one for fifty years.

ABRAHAM LEBOW

If it takes the highest kind of idealism to sacrifice one's life for an ideal, then the Nazis must be credited with the highest kind of idealism. Did not Hitler give his life for his ideal of the German *Herrenvolk*? Devotion to the cause of Israel did not require and therefore does not justify such atrocities as the murder of hostages. As for the Biblical reference in mind that, according to our Sages, though in general we are enjoined to cleave to God's attributes, an exception is made in respect to his retributive justice, for God says: *"Li nakom veshallem"* (Retribution and recompense are My exclusive prerogative.)

BOOKS RECEIVED

GUT UN FRUM (Good and Pious), by Moshe Zucker. In two "books": (1) Sketches, (2) Aphorisms. 175 pp. Published by the Yiddish Etisher Geselshaft (Society for Jewish Ethics), New York, 1948.

RESOLVING SOCIAL CONFLICTS, by Kurt Lewin, edited by Gertrud Weiss Lewin. This posthumous volume contains important contributions by the author in the field of social dynamics. The three parts of the book deal respectively with "Problems of Changing Culture, Conflicts in Face-to-Face Groups, and Inter-Group Conflicts and Group Belongingness." A foreword by Gordon W. Allport discusses the significance of Lewin's contributions to social psychology. With suggested readings and index xviii + 230 pp. Published by the Research Center for Group Dynamics, University of Michigan, and distributed by Harper and Brothers, New York. $3.50.

THESE ARE THE NAMES, by Alfred J. Kolatch. A fascinating study of Jewish nomenclature, the germinal idea of which was first published by the author in the November, 26, 1943 issue of *The Reconstructionist.* vii + 288 pp. Published by the Jonathan David Co., New York, 1948. $3.50.

BOOT CAMP, by Henry J. Berkowitz. A story of the adventures of a young Jew in the Truxton Naval Training Station. 384 pp. The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1948. $2.00.